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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by American Psychological Association, International Association of Applied Psychology, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Council of Psychologists, International Federation of Social Workers, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, International Federation on Ageing, Human Lactation Center, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, Soroptimist International, World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation, World Council for Psychotherapy, World Federation for Mental Health and World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 2006.

* E/CN.5/2007/1.

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Statement

1. We, the international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and members of the NGO Committee on Mental Health, working under the auspices of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO) are committed to the promotion of mental health and personal and societal well-being through prevention, treatment and delivery of quality mental health services by means of advocacy and education at the United Nations. Historically, the importance of including psychosocial aspects within the context of social development, the eradication of poverty and the establishment of sustainable employment has been largely overlooked at the United Nations. Growing scientific evidence of impediments to quality of life and productivity attributable to mental illness has heightened awareness of the global mental health agenda. The globalization of such an agenda, however, requires understanding that psychological and emotional well-being of individuals, families and communities is important to social development and requires the cooperation and leadership of Governments and societies. Prevention must be a priority coupled with research, education, legal capacity, training, and a public health system that incorporates an effective mental health component informed by economic and social development efforts. For example, full employment is a goal consistent with the needs of all people, including those suffering from mental distress and living in poverty. Everyone, by virtue of being human, requires fulfilling work and equitable remuneration commensurate with their capabilities, in order to function productively. Those who are excluded through discrimination, stigma or omission, must be empowered to challenge their conditions through legal resources and supportive social services. By joining forces, the mental health and social development fields can serve those who have been left out of the equation. People once considered a burden, in turn, become assets to their communities.

2. These objectives can be easily accomplished. New skills are not required to accomplish our mutual purposes. Mental health goals can be reached through the same methods of individual and collective capacity-building needed for developed, resilient and self-sustaining political economies and civil societies. Literacy, economic development, meaningful life-sustaining employment, effective laws, social service and network infrastructures are both mental health and social development tasks. So, too, are tools for the assessment of population outcomes and capabilities for community-level planning for social needs. By sharing tools, data and experience often separated in mental health and development categories, both fields will be strengthened. Prevention of mental illness and eradication of poverty on a large scale can be accomplished through collaborative efforts by merging social and health policy domains.

3. **Recommended action priorities**

- **Mental health and social development domains must be strengthened through collaboration in order to meet shared challenges and goals;**
- **In order to recognize the significance of mental health in the eradication of poverty, the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental distress should be included as a fundamental element of economic and social development in all United Nations, Governments and civil society efforts;**

- **The goal of full employment must include those who suffer from mental disabilities;**
- **The delivery of quality mental health and social services should be included in all aspects of social development work;**
- **Governments, the United Nations system and NGOs should ensure resources for those with mental disabilities are available to all people in the form of meaningful employment, legal protections, policies and services;**
- **Governments and the United Nations system should be open to the informed suggestions of NGOs, as reflected in this statement;**
- **Capacity-building must be a fundamental principle of United Nations education, and civil society-related endeavours associated with both mental health and social development, whether focusing on the individual, the family or the community;**
- **Assessment of population outcomes and capabilities must encompass mental health in the context of social development;**
- **Conceptualization of social development issues, assessment tools, data analysis, and experience must be shared by both mental health and social development fields in order to overcome poverty and achieve a better quality of life and productivity for all people, inherent in our mutual purposes.**